

SIR — I respond to Ulrich Mueller's comment on social status and sex (ratio of offspring), based on an examination of biographical compilations². The authors are presumably interested in the biological phenomenon of sex ratio at (live) birth. The representation of children in compilations such as *Who's Who* is a socially stressed report that is subject to a variety of distortions: reporting of perinatal mortality, illegitimacy, children of plural marriages, adoption and repudiation: all these are likely to be biased by social class and by sex. The data given can hardly be accepted at face value. If they were to be, we would then have to remove confounding with variables such as parity and age of mother, as well as differential prenatal mortality that may be associated with infection, malnutrition and other socially correlated causes.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find large datasets organized by biological family relationship. The large population census datasets are acquired by household rather than family, and are beset with many errors in statistical detail¹².

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